

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 PM-07 L-03 NSC-07 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

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FM AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2177

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

US MISSION BERLIN 288

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSSELDORF 0178

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: KUEHN ON HAMBURG ELECTION AND THE CURRENT POLITICAL  
SITUATION

1. DURING A CALL ON MINISTER PRESIDENT HEINZ KUEHN IN  
DUSSELDORF ON MARCH 5, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED FOR HIS REACTIONS  
TO THE RECENT HAMBURG ELECTIONS. KUEHN, WHO IS ALSO DEPUTY  
CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL SPD, ANSWERED AT LENGTH AND WITH  
REMARKABLE FRANKNESS. THE FOLLOWING WERE HIS SALIENT POINTS:

2. WHILE THERE WERE SOME SPECIAL LOCAL FACTORS OPERATIVE IN  
HAMBURG, THEY DID NOT AFFECT THE OVERALL RESULT AND THE SPD MUST  
RECOGNIZE THAT IT HAS RECEIVED A NATIONAL REBUKE. THE SPD CAN  
ONLY COME TO POWER WHEN IT CAPTURES A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF  
THE POLITICAL CENTER AS IT DID IN 1972 IN WHAT WAS IN LARGE  
MEASURE A SYMPATHY VOTE FOR WILLY BRANDT. THE HAMBURG RESULTS,  
HOWEVER, SHOW THAT MUCH OF THAT SUPPORT HAS EVAPORATED AND THIS  
CAN MEAN SERIOUS FUTURE DIFFICULTY FOR THE PARTY. IT MAY BE  
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ALREADY TOO LATE TO SALVAGE SPD CHANCES IN LOWER SAXONY

BEFORE THE JUNE LAND ELECTIONS. THE NATIONAL MOOD IS CONSERVATIVE AND A TREND ONCE UNDERWAY IS VERY DIFFICULT TO REVERSE. BUT, IF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP CAN MAKE THE NECESSARY DIFFICULT CHOICES IN TIME, PROSPECTS CAN BE IMPROVED FOR THE 1975 LAND ELECTIONS AND THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

3. THE AVERAGE VOTER IS RELATIVELY WELL OFF, BUT HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN HOW MUCH HIS SITUATION HAS IMPROVED; HE IS UNHAPPY THAT IT IS NOT IMPROVING AS RAPIDLY RIGHT NOW. EXPLANATIONS THAT THE FRG'S INFLATION RATE IS NOT TOO BAD RELATIVE TO OTHERS OR THAT AN OCCASIONAL ECONOMIC PLATEAU IS INEVITABLE ARE NOT POLITICALLY SALEABLE.

4. IN ADDITION, THE OBVIOUS CONFUSION AND DISUNITY IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS TURNED MANY VOTERS OFF. WHILE BRANDT'S LEADERSHIP STYLE OF POSTPONING A DECISION UNTIL A CONSENSUS EMERGES WORKS REASONABLY WELL IN QUIET PERIODS, IT IS PATENTLY INADEQUATE WHILE DIFFICULT AND RAPID DECISIONS ARE REQUIRED. IN FACT, BRANDT CANNOT MAKE A DECISION OR LEAD HIS CABINET TO MAKE ONE UNTIL HIS BACK IS AGAINST THE WALL AND HE HAS NO OTHER OPTION. THE LUDICROUS INDECISIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE MATTER OF AUTOMOBILE SPEED LIMITS IS AN EXAMPLE.

5. THERE IS MUCH TO BE ADMIRER ABOUT THE ALTRUISTIC OBJECTIVES OF SOME AMONG THE JUSO AND SPD LEFT WINGERS, BUT THE PARTY MUST MAKE IT CLEAR THAT MEMBERSHIP REQUIRES AN ADHERENCE TO DEMOCRATIC METHODS. HE PROFOUNDLY DISAGREES WITH SOME OF BRANDT'S CLOSEST ASSOCIATES WHO SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT THE SPD CAN BE A HOME FOR EVERYONE ON THE LEFT. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE ANTICS OF THE JUSO EXTREMISTS AND THE PARTY'S WEAKNESS IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM HAVE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED THE SPD'S IMAGE.

6. THE CDU IS NOT HURTING THE SPD, THE SPD IS DOING THE DAMAGE TO ITSELF. KOHL DOES NOT HAVE THE STUFF TO BE ANYTHING BUT A PROVINCIAL LEADER, ALTHOUGH HE IS AN HONORABLE MAN WHO KEEPS HIS WORD (WHICH HE CANNOT SAY ABOUT HESSE MINISTER PRESIDENT OSWALD). CARSTENS WAS A SUPERB STATE SECRETARY, BUT WILL NEVER BE A NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE. AND, BIEDENKOPF WHO HAS THE BEST MIND OF ANY IN THE CDU HAS A LONG TIME TO WAIT AND DEVELOP BEFORE HE CAN BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS A NATIONAL CANDIDATE.

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7. THERE IS A SERIOUS DEARTH OF YOUNGER POLITICAL TALENT. THERE ARE NO CIVIC LEADERS TODAY OF THE CALIBER OF REUTER, KAISEN, ETC., ALTHOUGH SCHULZ OF HAMBURG MAY DEVELOP. VOGEL WAS AN EXCELLENT MAYOR OF MUNICH AND HAS THE MAKINGS OF A NATIONAL POLITICIAN,

BUT HE HAS NOT BEEN TESTED. HIS SUCCESSES HAVE COME TOO EASY AND TOO EARLY.

8. AT THE SPD PRASIDIUM MEETING IN THE MORNING OF MARCH 5, THE MOOD HAD BEEN VERY SUBDUED IN THE WAKE OF THE HAMBURG DEBACLE. KUEHN ALMOST WELCOMED THE DEFEAT AS IT MAY BE THE CATALYST FOR TOUGH POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING. BRANDT, WHO CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO SHUCK USELESS ASSOCIATES, MAY NOW BE FORCED TO DO SO. HE HAS BEEN ILL SERVED BY HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS AND MANY OF THEM MUST GO. THE CABINET SHOULD BE SEVERELY PRUNED. FRANKE SHOULD LONG SINCE HAVE GONE AND LAURITZEN IS ONLY RIDICULOUS. THE LINE ALSO HAS TO BE CLEARLY DRAWN ON THE LEFT AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT DEMOCRATIC PRODEDURES SHOULD BE EJECTED FROM THE PARTY. EVEN IF A FEW THOUSAND WERE EXPELLED, MOST OF THEM WILL RETURN TO THE FOLD IN A FEW YEARS WHEN THEY HAVE MATURED. BRANDT SHOULD USE HIS POLITICAL LEVERAGE AHD SHOULD OCCASIONALLY THREATEN TO RESIGN IF THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO HALT SUCH OMINOUS DEVELOPMENTS AS THE SERIOUS PROPOSALS FOR AN IMPERATIVE MANDATE.

9. BRANDT, SCHMIT AND KUHN PLAN TO MEET ON MARCH 7 FOR A LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE HAMBURG ELECTION RESULTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PARTY WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOPING SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR THE SPD EXECUTIVE THE FOLLOWING DAY. KUEHN HOPES THAT HAMBURG WILL SHOCK THE SPD LEADERSHIP SUFFICIENTLY TO ACCEPT THE NECESSARY POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. HENNEMEYER

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